

VZCZCXYZ0006
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLI #1724 2000958
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 180958Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6935

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 001724

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PRM/ECA AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2018
TAGS: [PREF](#) [SMIG](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL DECLINES RESETTLEMENT REQUEST

REF: SECSTATE 5731

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, U.S. Embassy Lisbon
Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Ministry of Internal Administration (MAI) Refugee Advisor Pedro Barreto stated that Portugal has already filled its annual quota of 30 slots for asylum seekers and cannot accept the migrants from Guantanamo Bay Naval Base this year. Barreto added that Portugal had received more than 100 applications for resettlement by June and did not anticipate expanding its numbers further. Barreto suggested that the U.S. consider petitioning other EU partners to see whether other countries still had availability for 2008.

¶2. (C) Emboffs initially approached the MFA and Prime Minister's office with the resettlement request in May, however both deferred the decision to the MAI and promised to forward the request. The Ministry for Internal Administration has the portfolio because it is responsible for placing asylees into Portuguese society and ensuring their integration. Although UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres -- a former Prime Minister of Portugal -- contacted Minister Internal Administration Rui Pereira several weeks ago, Barreto told us that the Foreign Ministry had not passed the corresponding request on to the MAI for a decision. Barreto said he regretted that Portugal had already filled its 30 slots and stressed that the MAI would be willing to consider another request early next year. He made it clear that it was the timing, rather than political considerations, that had made resettlement impossible in 2008. He further noted that the MFA would send the Embassy an official reply over the next few weeks, but that the informal answer from the MAI had already been submitted to the MFA for processing.

¶3. (C) Comment: Portugal receives around 250 applications for asylum per year for its 30 slots, but it should not be counted out entirely for resettlement considerations. Barreto admitted that the US's 2006 request had been ignored largely because of the America-skeptical minister who held the office at that time. Since Pereira took office at the MAI, he has shown himself open to requests from the United States, including a recent agreement to send fire fighting support to help the U.S. Forest Service. With Pereira in charge, we expect better cooperation with the GOP on refugee issues in the future. End comment.
Ballard